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The Lincoln Meeting in Retrospect

A Symposium by some of our Members

I. JULIA E. CRANE, Potsdam, N. Y.

Another meeting of the National Conference of Music Supervisors has come and gone. What is this organization that takes people half way across the continent and so arouses their enthusiasm that they promise to attend the next meeting no matter where it may be? An organization only nine years old and one that is composed of public school music teachers. Who would have dreamed of such a thing twenty years ago? Possibly a few of the most active school music teachers themselves, but even they would have been foolhardy to mention it, as of all musicians the one who taught music in the public schools was the most insignificant, the least deserving of the title *musician.* One needs only to have read the Musical Courier a few years ago to recognize the contempt in which school music was held. But that day is past, and from being the humblest child in the whole family of musicians the Music Supervisor who is really awake to his opportunities is the leader in the educational world.

Time was when music belonged to the aristocracy alone, today it is the most democratic of all the arts, and it has become so through its connection with that democratic institution, the *public school.* Everywhere one goes he hears of Community work and whether it be plans for building a civic center, new ideas of co-operation between the business men and the farmer, community pageants, community festivals or community picnics, music must play a large part in the gatherings through which public spirit is aroused and the new plans launched.

And so the Conference of Music Supervisors has grown by leaps and bounds, and this year at Lincoln, the membership reached about seven hundred people, all interested in the development of school music.

The spirit which pervaded all the meetings was one which it was good to feel ,enthusiastic, generous, sympathetic; the spirit which leads each one to recognize the good in all he sees, claiming no monopoly on the "best methods."

The private conferences between sessions, with friends and co-workers; the warm welcome of the Lincoln people, the cordial interest shown by the Superintendent of Schools, the generous hospitality of the Chamber of Commerce, and the chorus singing at dinner each evening, and in the Library Car enroute might each serve as a topic worthy its own description. Of the formal program I may not speak, through lack of space. But it was all strong, inspirational, helpful, worth while. I am glad to have been at the Lincoln Conference.

II. W. OTTO MIESSNER, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

To my mind, one of the most notable results of the meeting of the

National Supervisors' Conferences is the breaking down of prejudices and traditions which a few years ago were all too noticeable.

The Supervisor who stays at home year in and year out is sure to get into a rut. The best cure for the one-sided, narrow-minded or "old-fogey" music teacher is to attend these meetings annually.

The Lincoln meeting was an inspiring one in every respect. The visiting of the music work of another school system, the illuminating addresses and discussions, and last, but not least, the social gatherings and "singfests" gave me new energy and enthusiasm for my own work, and I am sure they affected all who attended in a similar manner. The Grand Rapids meeting will be bigger and better. "On to Grand Rapids!"

III. WARREN E. POLLARD,
Ames, Iowa.

It would be impossible for me to write my impressions of the Lincoln meeting. It was my first conference, but not my last one, I hope. The meeting of people who were engaged in the same work, as I, who had the same problems and wanted to help in their solutions is the best and biggest thought from the conference to me. It was not a meeting of strangers, for you could approach any one else and readily find an interesting and helpful co-worker.

Then too, the singing periods of the conference were times of real enjoyment. One would naturally expect that the company would be able to read music, but to express it in such beautiful ways was the biggest inspiration I have ever received from chorus singing. And then, our beloved, Mr. Tomlins! He is as a power behind a throne, moving and working on a whole people. I pray he will be spared for many a conference, that we may all catch and give to Our Own America his excellent work and thought.

Being able to see the work as a unit in one of our representative cities of the middle west, has proved to me of value, in arranging and forming the plan of work in Ames for another year.

As one of the younger supervisors I shall anxiously watch all developments in community singing as brought out by the more experienced leaders in the Lincoln conference.

IV. NETTIE C. DOUD, Springfield, Illinois.

I arrived early in Lincoln and stayed late and enjoyed every feature of the excellent program. I was especially pleased to observe the thoughtful attention of the children of all the classes in song and sight reading, under such unusual circumstances, the uniformly beautiful tone quality in the class room and in concert, the enthusiasm and evident enjoyment on the part of the students in the High School assembly singing, and the co-operation of the entire teaching force in showing us every attention and making our stay so pleasant. I was especially glad to hear the demonstration in Violin under Mr. Carl Steckelberg, as we are making a start in that direction and have over one hundred children studying violin under an exceptionally competent instructor, and we are giving our first demonstration recital very soon.

It was a strenuous week, but full of helpful suggestions and I am sure we are all better Supervisors for having attended.

V. E. EUGENIE WILLETT, River Falls, Wisconsin.

During the past winter I made plans for visiting some Normal Schools this spring instead of going to the Music Supervisors' Conference, thinking that I might get more help in my work in that way than from the Confernece. But as the twentieth of March approached, the attractions in Lincoln, Nebraska, were too strong to be resisted.

Meeting the members of this Conference, even if there were no programs, would be worth the time and expense of the trip. Besides that, every program gave inspiration for increased effort to overcome our weakness and do our best to help make America musical.

One meting which was not on the program, but which was of vital interest to me, was that of the Normal School Supervisors which was held in the small hours of the night, owing to lack of other times, and out of which will come, we hope, a place for such a meeting on the program in Grand Rapids next year. I am looking forward to the next meeting and feel that I cannot afford to miss it.

VI. KARL GEHRKENS, Oberlin, Ohio.

As I think back over the events of our Lincoln meeting, the dominant impression that seems to remain is, that "the Spirit of the West"—the doing of large things in a large way—seems now to have made its way into the field of school music. I am not as much impressed with the value of mere "bigness" as are some of my friends in the West, and yet it gives me a thrill to hear about "five thousand dollars' worth of orchestral instruments" or "four units of credit in music in our high schools", or "ten thousand people gathered together to sing Community songs". But most of all am I more forcibly impressed than ever before with the "bigness" of our own field of Public School Music; and as a trainer of teachers, I feel more strongly than ever the responsibility of my position and the necessity of sending out only men and women who are broadly equipped in both general education and musical scholarship to carry on the work.

VII. GRACE VAN DYKE MORE, Wellington, Kansas.

My impressions of the Conference? They are many and varied. I will mention only the most important.

It was my first Conference, but I sincerely hope, *not* my last. I gained a new pride in my profession through association with the capable and altogether charming men and women of the same profession who gathered from all quarters to discuss and confer regarding topics of mutual interest. The spirit of intimate fellowship was delightful:—the spontaneous, whole-hearted singing at every available opportunity in illustration; the very excellent and varied programs showing work of all grades as well as the High School, were an inspiration and rich in suggestion to the younger Supervisors. The addresses and discussions were all stimulating and helpful, but uppermost in my mind, and most valuable of all, was, I believe, that free fellowship, that exchange of ideas, that comparison of methods of work, that realization that we are all laboring together, not for our own personal honor or aggrandizement, but for a common good—the musical upbuilding and enrichment of America.

VIII. JOHN W. BEATTIE, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The Lincoln Conference is several months past as I write this. I can still recall with pleasure a number of things which took place during those five extremely busy days, but there are two things which seem uppermost as I attempt to state briefly the strongest impressions I received.

The first has to do with the personnel of the delegates. What a splendid lot of people they were, representing as they did a profession which has not always been held in the highest esteem? They were totally unlike any body of the teachers I have seen before, because they did not have the harassed, care-worn appearance of the average school teacher. They looked and acted like ordinary mortals. Between speeches and entertainments they sat around the hotel, exchanged ideas and experiences and had a general good time.

The spirit of co-operation and helpfulness was the other thing I have remembered. No music supervisor seems to wish to copyright an idea. Whatever he strikes that is helpful, he passes along. The exchange of ideas among people who come from all over the country is valuable both to veterans and beginners and it helps make the Conference something which no live Supervisor can afford to miss.

IX. CATHERINE E. STROUSE, Emporia, Kansas.

I am so pleased to be asked my impressions of the Lincoln meeting, though how to put so much into a few words is a problem. The whole week, so full of life, enthusiasm, friendly giving and taking, sums up into one big inspiration. I know I taught better after it, and I am sure others have done the same. I am urging all my girls who are to go out to teach next year to begin at the first and save their pennies to go to Grand Rapids. I am sure that is recommendation enough.

X. EMMA H. KELLER, Ada, Oklahoma.

So fresh in my mind is the remembrance of the wonderful Lincoln Conference that it does not seem possible that two months have slipped by since that meeting.

It had not been my privilege to attend a national session since the one held in St. Louis four years ago, though each succeeding year I have been present in spirit and have endured all the pangs of self-pity on account of my enforced absence. Since my delightful experience at Lincoln it will be doubly hard to lose out at Grand Rapids next March.

The interest and enthusiasm manifested at these metings are most remarkable. In no other educational gathering is the feeling of good fellowship so much in evidence. The situation can only be compared to the re-uniting of a family coming together earnestly seeking help on some great vital question. Nor is any member of this immense family ever disappointed. "Ask and it shall be given you," we say confidently to all who attend the Conference.

One can hardly estimate just how much and in how many different ways one is benefitted and repaid for the time and money expended in attending the National Meetings, but one thing is certain, to attend once is ever after to feel that one cannot afford to be absent. Then,

too, the Conference, coming as it does, midway between the Christmas holidays and the closing of school gives a needed rest from school routine and puts zest and freshness into the last weeks that are usually so fatiguing. To be able to get first hand methods used in teaching music in cities where the work is as admirably given as it is in Lincoln is, in itself, of great value but when followed by friendly discussion lead by foremost educators in school music from all over the country, it is an opportunity no progressive teacher can afford to miss.

The work of the violin classes, or orchestras, bands and Miss Haywood's work in the high school were all most interesting and helpful and will furnish inspiration for months to come to those who were privileged to visit these classes. Then who of us have not compared our choruses with those of the Omaha high school and are not striving to measure up to their standards. I regret that every teacher of school music could not have heard Mr. Tomlin's—shall I say sermon? I know of no other word which so nearly describes his talk. It was the kind of message we need to keep us true to our ideals and out of one of the numerous by-paths that so often tempt us aside. Then there were the delightfully informal get-to-gether banquets closing each strenuous day, where entered only mirth, song, and good fellowship and where dignity was cast aside and 'the best were like the worst.'

Only a part of the many good and helpful things enjoyed at the Lincoln Conference have been mentioned, yet, to those who were present, enough to bring back many pleasant memories and eager anticipations for the Grand Rapids Meeting.

Since a large percentage of school superintendents seem to have such a vague idea of the work we are trying to do, how about holding our meeting for a few times with the National Superintendents' Conference? Would a session with the National Music Supervisors" Inspirational Conference be a mutual benefit?

XI. Irving W. Jones, Madison, Wisconsin.

Perhaps the most striking thing about the meting was its size. While not all of those in attendance were active music supervisors, still to me on my first association with the conference, the large membership made an equally large impression. To find that so many people were actively and studiously working at the problems of public school music and that they were trying to place it in a position above that which it has been supposed to occupy, was refreshing and gratifying. I think, too, that the attitude of this large membership towards meetings, addresses, and discussions, was much better than that of many teachers' gatherings which I have attended. To be sure, there is still need of a Sergeant-at-Arms but in spite of this fact, there was much real interest manifested in every gathering.

Another large striking item to me was the apparent attempt in discussions and papers to reach the more basic and fundamental problems of our work. This shows a trend of pedagogical study, of real investigation, rather than of superficial and whimsical debating about more or less obvious and unimpor-

tant details. The embodiment of this in committee reports, standardizations, and formulated courses of study will work for the ultimate recognition of a real pedagogy of music. In this connection it is, perhaps, not inappropriate to suggest that standardization of materials and results is only just started and that it might well be a large function of the conference to devote much of its energy to this quantitative phase of things. This is particularly true with measuring the progress of pupils, a topic which I hope to hear discussed at Grand Rapids.

The third striking thing to me was that in spite of the enormous array of concerts, demonstrations, and entertainments, the conference members individually and collectively, were in attendance more to do things themselves, than to be done for. Beyond a certain desire to see good class demonstration under normal conditions, displays did not make a wonderful appeal. This again, I believe, is a wholesome thing. The real work of the conference is the growth and broadening of the members which comes from their own self activity. Let us make an effort to have this phase still more noticeable at other meetings.

XII. MRS. L. V. SWEESY,
Berkeley, California.

Replying to your inquiry of the 18th inst. relative to the Lincoln Conference would say that the meeting was practical and inspirational —not a moment but was full of interesting events. Never to be forgotten is the singing each evening around the banquet table, by the delegates.

The special conference for those interested in Normal School work was quite profitable. Personal meeting with publishers of school material was good. I felt the loss of more "Round Table" or open sessions, also three or four active workers who knew most of the convention members, to act as a Reception Committee to see that delegates met members they ought to know. One day was spent visiting a public school of Lincoln and witnessing the manner of music instruction in various grades.

XIII. ALICE E. BIVINS, Ypsilanti, Michigan.

It is a great pleasure to write a few words of "Lincoln Impressions." I think it is safe to say it is one of the rarest experiences I have had since joining the ranks of the Music Supervisors. The meeting of so many people, coming into contact with those doing the same work (yet not the same), getting the viewpoints and enthusiasm of people of broader experience than my own, the inspirations which come with seeing and hearing all we were given to enjoy, these things welded together into an unexplainable something, make me feel more strongly that our profession is a progressive one necessary to the school curriculum. In order to keep in the van of this profession, new encouragement, new ideas, new enthusiasm must come to us. Where shall we get these necessary elements? At our National Music Supervisors' Conferences, is the answer I made to myself. I shall never feel I can miss another one.

XIV. ELIZABETH WELLEMEYER,

Marshalltown, Iowa.

You have asked me to write my impressions of the Lincoln Conference, and although several months have passed since the closing of that meeting, I still have a feeling of being overwhelmed by the many good things that were offered. It would be quite impossible to select any one as better than all the others. Mr. Miller and the Lincoln hosts proved themselves perfect in their capacity, and did everything possible for our pleasure and profit. I am hoping that the concert by supervisors will be repeated. It was a tremendous uplift to all of us and in the letters I have received from Lincoln people I feel that it was of tremendous uplift to them. Personally I was very much interested in the voice culture classes which Mr. Miller is conducting in High School, for we have made experiments in that line in Marshalltown for the past three years and it was splendid to sit back and see another supervisor carrying on some of your ideals. I can not see how anyone can afford to stay away from these meetings. I am planning to go to Grand Rapids and I am going to do everything I can to encourage people from Iowa to come too.

XV. D. MAY MILLER.

Elk Point, South Dakota.

I can't understand why you have conferred such honor upon me as asking me to write my impression of the Lincoln Conference, unless it is the fact that you must have sized me up as a tenderfoot, attending her first M. S. N. C. and thought that a few lines coming from such a source would likely smack of something a little new in the line of How-much-I-enjoyed-the-Conference and why?

You, no doubt, noticed that I was very much in evidence at all of the meetings. I went early and left late. I was not so much interested in meal time as I was in the fact that I might miss something worth while, if I left the meetings to attend to the inner-man, so I nearly always ate late, but found myself none the worse for the deferred meals, as I had absorbed a large amount of mental food.

But I want to put in a protest right here, that is, on meetings starting late and ending late, no sense to it. Supervisors should set an example of punctuality on starting and quitting.

Heretofore, all the M. S. N. C. have been too far away for me to attend, but I am so enthused since I came back from Lincoln, that I am already saving up the "Almighty Dollar" so as not to have to walk to Grand Rapids.

I was particularly impressed with the large amount of enthusiasm manifested by the majority of those present. Ninety-five per cent of them showed they came to Lincoln for inspiration and help, and not merely for a pleasure trip.

The great interest taken in the discussion of the general work and the large attendance at each meeting was really astonishing. To the majority of supervisors of music sight seeing and visiting were only thought of when the meetings had adjourned. I was proud of the supervisors as a class. They had the look that bespeaks alertness and efficiency. They also showed that true comradeship of wanting to help others on any point that was asked them.